



Kitchen Cheat Sheet: Baked Mac & Cheese

RESTLESSCHIPOTLE.COM | SOUTHERN COMFORT FOOD



Tips and Time Savers

- The cheesiness comes from two kinds of cheese used in two different ways. You can use more varieties if you like.
- Grate the cheese from a block of cheese – it will have a creamier texture when it melts.
- Whole milk works better than low-fat or fat free milk.
- When you add the milk to the roux stir...stir...stir.... it will look like it's clumping up but if you stir constantly it will smooth out. Stir until the mixture coats the back of a spoon.
- Put together this old fashioned macaroni and cheese casserole the night before if you like, just be sure to leave off the crumbs until you are ready to bake. When you get home from work the next evening, or get home from sky diving, or whatever it is you do, add the crumbs and slide it into the oven for a half hour while you relax with a glass of wine and your favorite reality show.
- As much as I hate to say this – overcook the macaroni just slightly. You don't want it a la dente for this dish. When it is soft (but not so much that it's mushy) then it absorbs the cheese sauce a bit more. Everyone will want to know your secret.
- Should you cover baked mac and cheese when cooking? Nope – it's not necessary. Baking it uncovered gives it a nice crispy top.
- For best flavor use a mixture of different cheeses. I used Swiss, medium Cheddar, and sharp Cheddar cheese but you can use any combination you like. A smoked Cheddar or Pepper Jack is fabulous in this!

Variations

- I like to use Panko for the top because it stays crispier but homemade bread crumbs or crushed Ritz crackers are fine, too.
- Mac & Cheese is versatile, you can add almost anything. Bacon, smoked sausage, leftover roast beef, your favorite vegetables...
- Some people like to add garlic powder to the cheese sauce.
- Use any shape of pasta you like.
- Try using evaporated milk instead of regular milk. It's even creamier!

Storage

Cover with plastic wrap or put leftovers in an airtight container. It will be fine in the refrigerator for up to 4 days.

This freezes well for 3 months or so. Cover tightly with aluminum foil and freeze.

Thaw in the refrigerator overnight then cover with aluminum foil and heat in a 350F oven for about 30 minutes, or until hot all the way through. You may need to add a little extra milk.

FAQs

Can you make this ahead of time and bake later?

Yes you can. Cover it and refrigerate without the crumbs on top. Just before baking add the crumbs and you're ready to go!

How do you make it creamy again when reheating?

Be sure to add some milk when reheating and keep the dish covered. That will revive it a little and keep it from drying out.

Why shouldn't I use pre-shredded cheese?

Pre-shredded cheese is dusted with cellulose to keep it from clumping together. This also keeps it from melting into a creamy sauce. Always buy a block of cheese and grate it yourself.

Can I use non-dairy milk and cheese in this recipe?

You can. I don't think the texture is as good but non-dairy products like milk and vegan cheese will work.

What are the best cheeses for baked mac & cheese?

I like to make the ultimate baked macaroni and cheese with a mixture of cheeses that almost always includes sharp Cheddar. Cheeses to try are:

Pepper Jack

Colby

Swiss

Gruyere

Mild Cheddar

Parmesan

Mozzarella

American

Extra Sharp Cheddar

Monterey Jack

You can even add about 4-6 ounces of cubed cream cheese to make it richer and creamier.

Nice to have

As an Amazon Associate, I earn commission from qualifying purchases.

 Whip it. Beat it. Stir it like you've got something to prove. This upgraded balloon whisk set handles everything from roux to rebellion, with three sizes so you're always holding the right tool for the meltdown. Dishwasher safe, sass approved — and currently making your old whisk look like a pipe cleaner.

Grab the set and give your sauce the whisking it deserves. 